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Namdharies, better known in Indian History as Kukas, are Puritans of the Sikh Faith, their distinctive practices are:-

1. They are strictly vegetarian in diet.
2. They are strictly forbidden to take alcoholic drinks or wine.
3. Earning of livelihood by mannual labour, and honest means.
4. Personal Cleanliness, Simplicity in dress, good conduct and practical charity.

The Political Programme of the Namdharies :-

Historically.

The Namdhari movement was the first organised struggle to liberate India from the political domination of the British.

Guru Ram Singh who planned comprehensive programme for the achievement of political freedem for his countrymen was born on Basant Panchmi day 1872 (Bikram era) or 1816 A.D. in a small village BHAINI in Ludhiana District. His father followed the profession of a village Carpenter along with agriculture.

As a youngman Guru Ram Singh joined the army of Maharaja Ranjit Singh as a soldier.

After the first Anglo-Sikh war of 1845, he left the Army and settled in his village and took up agriculture.

After the annexation of Punjab by the British in 1849 and the banishment of the Last Sikh King of the Punjab Maharaja Dalip Singh; the British rulers started the work of consolidating their political power in Northern India.

In order to keep the spirit of resistance against the foreign rulers burning in the mind of the Indians, Guru Ram Singh founded the Socio-political movement.

The basic principles of the movement as enunciated by Guru Ram Singh on the 12th April 1857 were as follows in the words of the present Rashtarpati of India Dr. Rajindar Prasad Ji (vide an article in Newspaper Satyug 1935). The original articles is in Hindi. The English translation is as follows:

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"Guru Ram Singh considered Political freedom as a part of religion. The organisation of the Namdharies became very strong. The movementof boycott and non-cooperation, which Mahatma Gandhi started so vigonously in our times, was preached by Guru Ram Singh fifty years ago for the Namdharies."

Guru Ram Singh's non-ccoperation movement contained the following five essentials:-

1. Boycott of Government Service.
2. Boycott of Educational institution started by the British.
3. Boycott of Law Courts started by the British.
4. Boycott of Foreign Clothes.
5. To refuse to obey the laws and orders, which one's conscience abhors.

(Vide Newspaper Satyug, 10th Magh 1992 Indian era).

Within 7 years the movement claimed nearly 300,000 followers.

The British Government became alarmed at the rapid growth of the movement. The Government took very strong measures to suppress the movement from 1863 onwards.

(1) Guru Ram Singh was ordered not to move out of his Headquarters. All the Social and Religion gatherings of the Namdharies were banned.

(2) Police officials and petty village officials were ordered to keep a strict watch over the movement of the individual Namdharies.

In November 1871 an enquiry was instituted by the Government into the Political activities of the Namdharies Guru and his followers. The officers reported the desirability and necessity of the deportation of the Namdhari Guru and his Chief organisers to places far away from the Punjab and the adoption of oppressive measures against the sect, as the movement was decidely a political one and of dangerous nature."

On the 15th January 1872, there was free fight between a band of Namdharies and the police of the Malerkotla State,

in which about ten persons died and several wounded on both sides. .The Namdharies surrendered themselves to the officers of the Patiala State. By the orders of a British Deputy Commissioner of Ludhiana District, Mr. L. Cowan, the arrested persons were brought to Malerkotla on the 17th January. On their arrival at about 4 P.M., forty nine of them were blown away from guns, and one was cut with swords, without any pre-trial or orders from the competent higher authorities. On the 18th January a formal trial was held by Mr. T.D. Fersyth, Commissioner of Ambala Division and sixteen were blown away from guns without even informing the higher authorities. Guru Ram Singh and his 12 Chief Organizers (Subas) were arrested under Bengal Regulation III of 1818.

Guru Ram Singh was deported to British Burmah in March 1872. Eleven of his Chief Organizers were deported to different places, i.e., Aden, Moulmein, Asirgah, Chunar and Hazaribagh, as State Prisoners.

The British Government took very oppressive measures against the sect, throughout the Pujab and the Punjab States.

A police post was stationed at the Headquarters. The family members of Guru Ram Singh and his successor Guru Hari Singh and his three sons, the present Guru Partap Singh, Maharaj Nihal Singh and Late Maharaj Gurdial Singh were kept as prisoners in their house. No one could enter or go out of the house without being searched by the police. This continued up to the year 1922. All meetings of the Namdharies were banned throughout the Punjab and the Punjab States. Movements of the Namdharies were watched by the police. More than 5 Namdharies could not meet for any purpose whatsoever without the previous permission of the district authorities.

In order to make his political programme successful, Guru Ram Singh had spread his sphere of activities in the border States of Nepal and Kashmir. Contacts were made with the rulers of these States.

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Even after the deportation of Guru Ram Singh Ji, to Rangoon in British Burmah, letters were exchanged between him and the Russian Authorities through the Governor of the Russian Turkistan.

The British authorities in 1878, unearthed an intrigue of the Kukas with the Russians. The Chief man responsible for carrying on the communication Gurcharan Singh was arrested and kept as State Prisoner. As a result of this, Guru Ram Singh Ji was removed from Rangoon Jail to Mergui Jail, a very unhealthy place under a very strict watch. According to the Government records, Guru Ram Singh died in Mergui Jail in December 1885.

Namdharies joined the Congress Organisation as a body at the time of the starting of the Non-cooperation movement and the Swedeshi Movement by Mahatma Gandhi in the twenties.

In 1929, the Namdharies took a leading part in the Congress Session at Lahore.

At the time of the partition of the Country in 1947, the Namdharies were strictly forbidden by the present Namdhari Guru, under penalty of ex-communication to take part in loot, arson, killing of Muslims, or abduction of muslim women and children. No Namdhari besmeared the good name of his sect by committing any such ghastly sins.

For the first time in history, the Namdharies are holding their conference or Mela in Delhi on 17th and 18th March, 1956.

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